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ABSTRACT

This document describes the overall organization of study areas and learning activities to be undertaken for completion of an Empire State College degree. When formulated and officially approved it becomes the framework within which particular contracts are designed. The framework is divided into five sections: application, timing, assistance, approval, and review. (MJM)

EMPIRE STATE COLLEGE

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
SARATOGA SPRINGS
NEW YORK 12866

MEMORANDUM

To: Empire State College Faculty
From: Arthur W. Chickering *AWC*
Subject: Program of Study Policies and Procedures

May 15, 1973

The attached policy statement is based on discussions at the Learning Centers and on recommendations emanating from those discussions. It draws on earlier policy statements and stands as a small nibble at a major problem which presents significant conceptual and operational challenges. By distributing this policy statement now I certainly don't want to undercut or in any way diminish the attention we give to this matter and I hope it will be high on the agenda of the Academic and Learning Programs and Related Research Committee. Indeed I would hope they would establish a sub-committee which will be able to give concerted attention to this critical ingredient. But we do need a more clear basis for proceeding until that work can be carried out and these policies will provide that basis for now.

If you have reactions you can forward them directly to the Academic and Learning Programs Committee chairman when he or she is identified, or prior to that time, feel free to send them along to me.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
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Program of Study
Policies and Procedures¹
Effective June 1, 1973

Empire State College takes the individual student's educational purposes as the starting point and continuing basis for the learning activities she pursues while enrolled. This approach requires that each student articulate her purposes as best she can, and that she identify the areas in which she will work, the particular activities to which she will put her time and energy, and the appropriate methods and criteria for evaluation. For this reason each student is asked to begin this kind of thinking in pre-admission information sessions, on the admissions application, and during orientation workshops. She is asked to address questions of purpose, learning activities, and evaluation explicitly when she prepares and carries out a Learning Contract.

In this context the Program of Study is a key element, for it is this document which describes the overall organization of study areas and learning activities to be undertaken for completion of an Empire State degree. When formulated and officially approved it becomes the framework within which particular contracts are designed; when it has been completed to the satisfaction of the student and faculty, the student is ready to receive her degree. It is, therefore, the major document by which each student articulates her purposes and plans her work at the College, and it is the major framework by which the faculty expresses its standards and expectations and achieves an acceptable level of congruence between the students' purposes and the College objectives.

The Application

A student seeks Program approval by submitting an application which describes:

1. Her past educational and occupational experience and activities undertaken while enrolled at Empire State, prior to enrollment, or both.

¹To avoid the awkwardness of he/she and other terminological circumlocutions this document uses only the feminine pronouns, but in each case they should be understood to include the males as well.

2. The major purposes, interests, plans or aspirations she wants to pursue.
3. The major areas and activities to be undertaken, the Mentors with whom she will work, the organized programs, field experiences, or other major resources to be used, and the general time requirements projected.

The primary requirement for this application is that it describes a "major", an area of concentration, organizing theme, or special emphasis which will be pursued to levels of substantial depth and complexity. The application may also indicate other areas of interest which will fall outside the area of primary effort. The attached form is the first page of the application.

There are many conceptual and cultural frameworks within which areas of concentration can be developed. Four major clusters are readily apparent:

1. Vocational/Professional -- Expectations or requirements associated with various vocations, professions, certifying agencies, graduate schools, or other educational institutions. A prospective businessman, teacher, nurse, engineer, doctor, lawyer, psychologist, historian, or "other" will want to take these expectations and requirements into account.
2. Disciplinary/Interdisciplinary -- Units and sequences associated with various traditional and emergent conceptions of the disciplines. A student who wants to develop thorough understanding and competence within one or more particular areas of knowledge, can find useful guidelines and precedents by consulting various traditional arrangements or new interdisciplinary arrangements.
3. Problem Oriented -- Knowledge and competence pertinent to various social problems and human concerns. A student who wants to tackle a social problem -- population, environment, race, civil liberties, transportation, world peace -- will need to obtain the knowledge and competence called for by his particular area of concern.
4. Holistic/Thematic -- Knowledge and competence pertinent to various thematic interests or holistic studies. A student may be interested in organizing his work around a major area or theme which has conceptual complexity and integrity.

This list is not intended to be exhaustive and the alternatives are not mutually exclusive. A disciplinary sequence can be pursued with reference to a particular social problem; some disciplines are roads to professional or vocational preparation. Furthermore, a student may wish to create her own particular combination of liberal studies through which she systematically examines the interrelationships among several diverse areas.

Timing

A student seeks Program approval when either one of the following conditions have been satisfied:

1. When six to nine months of full-time study or the equivalent period of half-time study, remain to complete the AA or AS degree, or when 12-18 months of full-time study or its equivalent remain for the BA or BS degree. Individuals who receive more than 24 months advanced standing must have submitted an approved Program of Study as part of their application for advanced standing.
2. When major elements of the work remaining to be done can be described with reasonable clarity and conviction.

Beginning students who receive little or no advanced standing will seldom be ready to outline their total college career and therefore few will find it helpful to prepare a Program of Study for official approval. Many of these students, however, will want to develop tentative plans which outline the major areas of study to be undertaken during the following twelve months. This tentative plan frequently will be modified in response to changing interests and aspirations as the student pursues her early studies. Advanced students who receive substantial amounts of advanced standing will need to prepare a Program of Study either at entrance or soon after. In many cases the area of concentration identified will include learnings brought from prior academic or non-academic experiences, and the time remaining will be spent on studies pertinent to that area. In some cases the area of concentration may be completely satisfied by prior learnings and the time requirements for the degree may be fulfilled by a diverse range of experiences and activities which need not necessarily be related to the particular purposes which provided the basis for the area of concentration.

Assistance, Approval, and Review

Most students will need help thinking through their purposes and plans and preparing the Program of Study application. Learning Center Mentors and administrators are prime sources of such assistance but adjunct faculty members, tutors, and resource persons in the community and elsewhere can make important contributions and students can be helped to use them.

When an application is ready it is submitted to the Associate Dean or his designee for preliminary review, and then either returned to the student with suggestions or passed on to the Learning Center Review Committee. The Committee may ask the student to appear, and the student may request the opportunity, but there is no requirement that either the student or the Committee exercise that option. An approved Program of Study can be changed by submitting a modified plan for approval by the Learning Center Committee.

When a student completes the next to last Contract of her Program of Study her record is reviewed by the Learning Center Committee. If the basic requirements of the Program will have been completed by the end of her final Learning Contract she is recommended for the appropriate degree. If the Committee judges that the work remaining to be done cannot be completed in the context of the final Contract, the Committee informs her of the additional work needed and makes no degree recommendation.

The basic frameworks for initial approval and final review are provided by the purposes of the student and the College objectives. It is not expected that either the long term objectives of the student or the broad objectives of the College will be completely fulfilled during the undergraduate experience. Empire State recognizes the importance of life-long learning and personal development and there is a clear expectation that students will continue to learn after they leave Empire State. Indeed an overarching purpose of the College is to help amplify that process and the motivation associated with it. Therefore, judgments concerning Program approval and degree recommendations must take these complicating factors into account while maintaining high standards and expectations concerning the achievement and development of each person.

Application for Approval for PROGRAM OF STUDY

EMPIRE STATE COLLEGE

Student's Name: _____

Soc. Sec. #: _____

Please give a detailed description of: (a) the student's Past Educational and/or Occupational Experience and activities undertaken while enrolled Empire State College, or prior to enrollment, or both; (b) the Major Purposes, Interests, Plans or aspirations the student wants to pursue; and (c) the Major Areas and Activities to be Undertaken, the Mentors with whom the student will work, the organized programs, field experiences, or other major resources to be used, and the general time requirements projected. Do not spell out in detail the particular learning contracts to be undertaken, but provide a clear framework within which the pertinence of these particulars will be apparent. Organize the application statement under the three headings underlined above. Use additional pages as necessary.

Learning Center Signatures:

Student: _____

Committee Chairman: + _____

Assoc. Dean: _____

Date Approved: _____